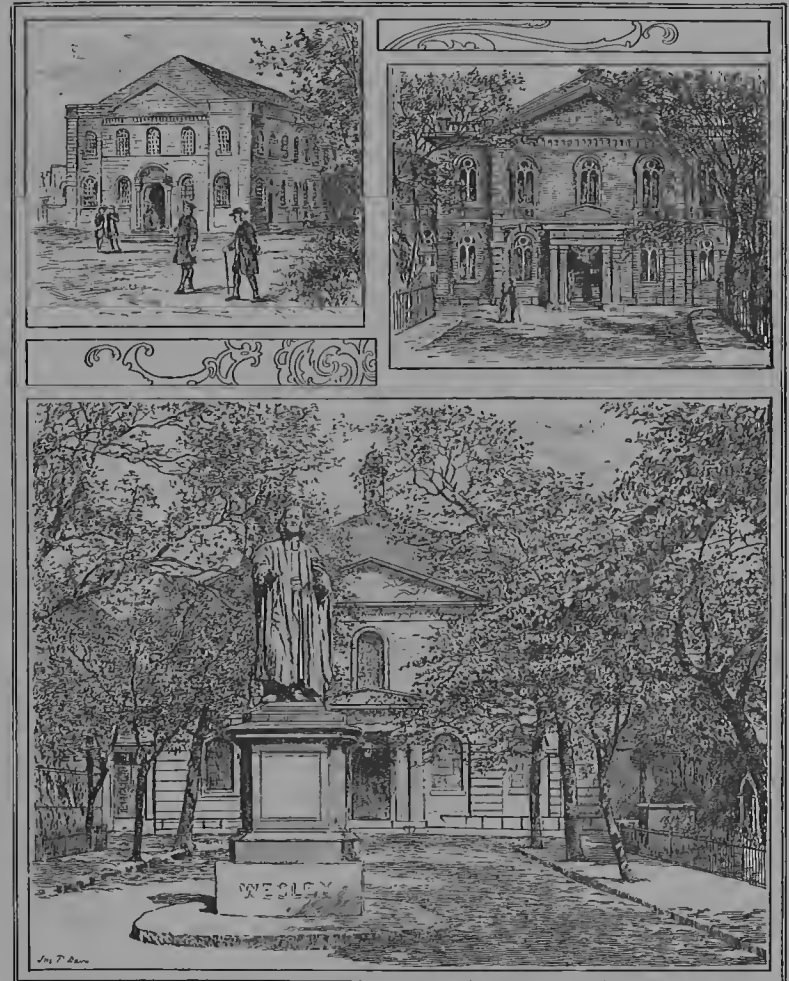


# *The Historical Trail*

## *1978*



Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London.

As it originally appeared in 1778.

Where the Ecumenical Conference met, 1881.

City Road Chapel, 1901.

## WAR TIME EVANGELISM

An Effective Witness During the Revolution—

A Chapter from the Life of Benjamin Abbott

by

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The Reverend Benjamin Abbott though a man of limited educational opportunities, was surely one who had been providentially endowed with many remarkable gifts. Following his awakening from a sinful life by a thorough conversion to Christ at age forty, all his gifts were completely committed to his Saviour.

The proper use of his unique gifts enabled Abbott to accomplish a major achievement in the American Church, and especially in Methodism during the years of the War of Independence. His conversion was six years after the planting of Methodism in America and four years before the Declaration of Independence. These events placed him chronologically in an advantageous position in relation to the work he was destined to perform in this period. Also geographically he was situated to great advantage. Between the two important ports, New York and Philadelphia, then occupied by the British, he ministered courageously to the young and struggling societies of Methodism and enabled them to keep alive and even grow during the dark days of the War. It must also be remembered that the greater strength of Methodism both before and during the Revolution was in the South, especially in Virginia and Maryland.

By the time of the outbreak of the War all of Wesley's missionaries had either returned to England or Canada, except Asbury himself, who was forced into hiding. This sudden loss of official leadership made it difficult for the newly organized societies and discouraged all but the stouthearted. It was especially hazardous in the provinces of the Jerseys which became the scene of many of the Revolutionary battles. In this region Abbott during a period of four years had been preaching and organizing societies throughout most of the State. The withdrawal of the regular itinerants and the amazing success of Abbott's ministry as a local preacher summoned him to a place of strategic leadership in spiritual values in this center of the Revolutionary battleground.

Scudder confirmed this opinion by the following statement:<sup>1</sup>

He (Abbott) did not join the Conference until 1789, but he was not less an itinerant (as a local preacher, 1772-89) than any of its members, especially in his State of New Jersey. Here was his vast circuit, and he was the chief instrument in preserving the spiritual life of its societies during the distracting period of the Revolution.

Further evidence of the importance of Abbott's leadership during this period of military conflict was seen from the fact that the official work of the Conference was so disorganized that for the year 1779 there was no appointment made in the entire territory of New Jersey. This of course meant that whatever work was to be accomplished during this emergency must needs be done by the native lay preachers and the laymen themselves. It was clearly evident that Abbott and those associated with him made the most of this which was certainly a perilous opportunity.

Lednum observes the influence of the war upon Methodism in New Jersey saying that while it was enlarging in other places south and west, its progress between New York and Philadelphia was difficult.<sup>2</sup>

Though this part of the work was not much attended to by the travelling preachers, while the hostile armies were contending with each other here; there were a few local preachers doing what they could. At the head of these stood the Reverend Benjamin Abbott, who, for the sixteen years that he sustained that relation to Methodism, was probably the most available that the Methodists ever had. He had seen the arm of the Lord revealed under his ministry in the conversion of all sorts of people; placid Friends found a more spiritual religion than that in which they had been trained; those who had danced to the sound of the violin, had experienced the love of Christ, which "danced their hearts for joy"; the inebriate had been brought to beg for mercy on his knees; and the bigoted Papist, in whose "fiery soul deaths wandered like shadows," had been changed into the gentleness of the lamb.

It seems to have been in the year 1779 that Mr. Abbott made his first preaching tour in Jersey. The great work that was going on under his ministry in Mannington (Salem County) induced the Methodists of New Mills (Pemberton, Burlington

<sup>1</sup>M. L. Scudder, *American Methodism* (Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton & Co., 1867), p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>John Lednum, *A History of the Rise of Methodism in America* (Philadelphia, 1859), p. 235.

County) to invite him to their place; here the people, for the first time, saw the great effects that his preaching produced in prostrating the people. This new development alarmed them at first, but when they saw the slain revive as witnesses of God, they rejoiced in it. The town became alarmed with the exultations of some who found the Lord. From New Mills he went some miles, and preached with great success in a Presbyterian church. Many were awakened and about twelve were born again. One of the deacons of the church was regenerated, and became a Methodist. A very profane young man, who was called "swearing Jack," was awakened, and became a Christian. A number of Indians being present, were greatly affected; these were, probably, the descendants of those for whom Mr. Brainard had labored.

It was at the time when the destructive effect of the Revolution upon the Methodist societies had reached its height (1779) that Abbott made his evangelistic tour into Delaware and Pennsylvania. He spoke of being "pressed in spirit" for some time to do this, and because the War was then raging through the land, he knew full well that he was risking his very life at every turn of his journey. He proceeded, however, under the compulsion of an urgency, which he understood quite clearly to be a summons from God. The truth of this divine summons was soon substantiated. He visited in a month's time nearly every community in Pennsylvania where Methodism had been started, preached with the same power that had attended his word in New Jersey, saw the same miraculous results which had followed him everywhere, formed new societies, and strengthened the societies everywhere notwithstanding the demoralizing influences of the War.

This tour of the sister State was in addition to the principle activity, which was the work then centering in New Jersey. There it was not only maintained and preserved from utter destruction, but certain advances were made and important foundations laid. This was indicated by the marked growth in membership and the forming of new societies. Stevens reflected upon this situation in the following comment:<sup>3</sup>

During most of the War Methodism had its chief successes in its southern fields. Abbott and his fellow-laborers kept it alive and moving in New Jersey, and at the peace that State reported more than one thousand members.

<sup>3</sup>Abel Stevens, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Vol. I (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1868), p. 422.

The far-reaching influence of the spiritual foundations that were thus being established by such a ministry to which Abbott was giving his most dynamic leadership was also recognized by Francis Bazley Lee:<sup>4</sup>

When Benjamin Abbott, that remarkable evangelist, came to Trenton in 1778, found the meeting house of the Methodist Episcopal Church turned into a stable, and could count only one hundred and fifty members of his society in all New Jersey, he realized the social force which he and his associates, following Asbury through New Jersey, had set in motion. Through the days immediately preceding the Revolution, and during the War itself, the growth of Methodism was so small as to be scarcely appreciated. In 1772 in New Jersey there were only 19 members, which rose to 200 the next year, 300 in 1775, 500 in 1781, and 1000 in 1783. Thence for fifty years Methodism surged like a great tide, inundating, it may be said, the southern portion of the State. In the counties of Burlington, Old Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland, and Cape May, all of which by 1830, had a population of about 92,000, there were 7,000 Methodists . . . one in thirteen . . . . The total number in the State was about 15,550.

These remarkable evidences of achievement and of continuing fruitfulness, which are the results of Abbott's timely leadership were not alone due to his coming to this perilous opportunity, but they were also due to the character and attitude of the man himself. His understanding of the importance of his spiritual ministry, his sane attitude toward the colonies in their relationship to the mother country when many were losing their equilibrium, and the fearlessness with which he faced every danger, were qualities which fitted him admirably for the special task of that hour of destiny. Abbott spoke of the severe pressures of these times when he remarked, "But for my part I never meddled in the politics of the day. My call was to preach salvation to sinners, and to wage war against the works of the devil."

How effective was the power of this humble personal witness! Where argument or contention would surely have failed, the timely word of a faithful witness succeeded, and the power of the Gospel was repeatedly demonstrated.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Bazley Lee, *New Jersey as a Colony and a State*, Vol. III (New York, 1903), p. 316.

## AN HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL RECORD of the FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF PENNINGTON

1774-1974

by

Phyllis B. D'Autrechy

In the late 1600's, Daniel Coxe of London purchased a tract of 30,000 acres above the falls of the Delaware which was to become known as Hopewell Township from which the city of Trenton and the townships of Trenton and Ewing were later separated. First in Burlington County, Hopewell Township was set off to Hunterdon when that county was established in 1714. In 1838, Hopewell Township became the largest area of present Mercer County. The general term "Hopewell" applied to any part of the tract during its early history although several small communities were developing within its boundaries. By 1708, a small settlement had grown up around the cross roads which led westerly to the River Delaware and southerly towards Trenton, then Trents Town. First called Queenstown in honor of the English Queen Anne, the name was changed to Penny Town and finally, Pennington.

For decades, the religious life of the community and its environs centered around the Presbyterian Congregation of Maidenhead and Hopewell of which the immigrant, Joshua Bunn and his family, including son, Jonathan, were faithful supporters.

About 1770, Captain Thomas Webb paused in his journeys to preach in Trenton where a society was formed as early as May, 1772. According to tradition, Jonathan Bunn was converted to Methodism under the teachings of Captain Webb. "Mr. Bunn withdrew from the Presbyterian Church and united with the Trenton (Methodist) Church early in 1774; letters from the Rev. William Watters and subscription papers still extant (1885) confirm this date and he, therefore, became without question of doubt, the first Methodist resident of Pennington."<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Bunn, born 29 January 1744, married Mary Shinn in 1776. She was a devout Methodist of Pemberton whom he met while

<sup>1</sup>George Scarborough, *One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary, First Methodist Episcopal Church, Pennington, N.J.*, 1924, p. 5.

attending a quarterly conference in New Mills. Brother and Sister Bunn had eight surviving children and all inherited the ancestral zeal serving the church in almost every official capacity. One line of the Bunn family has served the church for seven generations down to the present day.

Jonathan became the leader of the Hopewell class by 1773.<sup>2</sup> The first mention of Jonathan Bunn in the existing original records of the Trenton Church is an entry in the Trustees Minute Book of 27 August 1774 which notes that a 16 shilling collection "by cash of Jonathan Bunn" had been collected. Within two years, the amount collected had risen to one pound and four shillings. Considering the times, the increase was probably due to an additional number of class members. They usually met in the Bunn home, although meetings were also held in the Kempel, Lanning, Fidler, Phillips, and Paradise homes. Love feasts were held in the Bunn barn.

The schism which split the Presbyterian Church of America in the mid 1700's resulted in the formation of a local group known as the New Side or New Light Presbyterians. Garret Johnson who owned the ferry where George Washington debarked on Christmas night, 1776, was a member of the splinter group. Their meeting house was built about 1744 on an acre of ground one mile west of Pennington on what is now West Delaware Avenue. It was abandoned when most of the errant members returned to the mother fold. With the number of members in the Pennington Methodist Society ever increasing, this empty meeting house became a haven. Sometime during the American Revolutionary War, meetings were first held there—the acre remaining in the possession of the Methodists ever since. It became the final resting place of soldiers of the Revolution and Civil War, ministers of two faiths, the founders of Methodism in Pennington and Titusville as well as the nephews of John Hart, signer of the Declaration of Independence; stones dating from 1744 to 1935.

The leading American Methodist itinerant pioneers fostered the growth of the new society with their presence, prayers, and preachings. According to tradition, the Bunns entertained such visiting ministers as Asbury, George, McKendree, Whatcoat, Webb and others. William Duke recorded in his journal that "he rode to Penny-

<sup>2</sup>175th Anniversary Booklet of the First Methodist Church of New Jersey, 1772-1947. *The Third Oldest Methodist Church in North America, Trenton, N.J.* 1947, p. 16.

town to preach at night."<sup>3</sup> In his journal dated Monday, 8 August 1796, Bishop Francis Asbury wrote that he had passed through Pennytown. On 6 July 1806, he "rode to Pennington, housing for the night with Jonathan Bunn" where he also sought refuge from "a blessed rain" on Saturday, 16 August 1803."<sup>4</sup>

Trenton Circuit was not recognized in the Annual Conference Minutes until 1817 but apparently was in existence prior to that date because the first entry in the Stewards Book for the Trenton Circuit is dated 20 May 1815 about five months after Jonathan Bunn's death. This first quarterly meeting collected \$8.00 from Hopewell (Pennington) Station and \$5.00 from Fidler's (now Titusville).\*

By 1826, the adopted Old Red Church had become unfit for further use and was torn down. The congregation was incorporated on 13 March 1826 as "The Methodist Episcopal Church of Pennington."<sup>5</sup> Among the trustees were Jonathan's sons, Joshua, Joseph, and Jonathan Jr. and his son-in-law, Samuel Fidler. In April of the same year, the trustees purchased 13/100's of an acre in Pennington to be used as a site for a house of worship.<sup>6</sup> The architecture of the building was very humble in style with no ornaments or frescoes, with comfortable pews and a balcony on three sides. It had a box pulpit with winding stairs leading to it. The building is now a private dwelling. When the trustees made settlement with the manager, it was found that in cash, \$1,516.92 had been spent.

At the Annual Conference held at Wilmington, Delaware on 11 April 1832, Pennington became a circuit separate from Trenton. The first stationed preacher was William H. Bull whose charges, besides Pennington, included preaching stations at Mt. Zion, River Church (Titusville), and Lawrence. Two hundred members represented Pennington Circuit at the close of Mr. Bull's ministry here. For this work he was paid \$241 for the year, 1833.

The congregation acquired its second piece of property in 1833

\*Letter from Rev. Robert B. Steelman. Information from his records.

<sup>4</sup>*The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*. 3 Volumes. Elmer T. Clark, editor in chief. Epworth Press, London and Abingdon Press, Nashville, Volume 2, pp. 93, 512, 398.

<sup>5</sup>The Fidlers settled in Hopewell Township before 1703. John, son of the immigrant, was probably the first Methodist Fidler. His son, Samuel, married Sarah, daughter of Jonathan Bunn and is considered the founder of Methodism in Titusville in the western portion of the township.

<sup>6</sup>Volume 1 of Special Deeds of Hunterdon County, N.J., p. 442.

<sup>7</sup>Volume 40, Hunterdon County Deeds, p. 304.

when they purchased a parsonage adjoining the church lot on the south.<sup>7</sup> This building is also a private residence now. The first Sunday School was formed during Mr. Bull's second year in the parsonage. Joseph Bunn Sr. was its first superintendent.

In 1836, the Rev. John Knox Shaw was our fourth appointed minister. Through his untiring efforts, the Methodist Conference of New Jersey selected Pennington as the site for the Methodist Male Seminary as it was first named. The Pennington School and the community have had a pleasant relationship ever since. A fine spirit of cooperation has always existed between the school and the Pennington Church which, by reason of being the spiritual home of the students of the Seminary, has licensed to preach many outstanding men of Methodism. Perhaps the establishment of the Seminary caused many retired ministers such as Richard Petherbridge, Isaac Winner and Edward Sanders to retire to our lovely valley.

In the next six years, members were set off from the circuit to form separate and independent congregations in Dolington, Pa., Amwell, Lawrenceville and Rock Mills. By April 1844, 313 members remained in Pennington's overcrowded church.

During the ministry of Thomas Soverign, new property on South Main Street but closer to the center of town was purchased.<sup>8</sup> The cost of the new edifice was about \$6000. The church was remodeled in 1876 when, besides increasing the size of the church, a graceful spire was erected over the front and in it placed the first bell which called to worship a Methodist congregation of Pennington.

In 1868, a house and lot were purchased south of the new church and the parsonage moved to this location. Although this property has been retained, the parsonage was relocated to Eglantine Avenue in 1951.

The last major construction was the erection of a new Christian Education Building named for Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Clarkson, long time members of the church whose generous bequests made this project possible in 1962.

Our charge conference reports are a diary linking each event to create the story of our church. Many seemingly small events are woven together: the formation of the Missionary Society in 1838 and the Infant Society in 1846, the dispute over the matter of the mingling of the sexes in the church sittings (1863). In 1880, the

support of the minister was set at \$1000 with an extra \$50 for the keeping of his horse. The first strawberry festival was held in 1885 and continues to this day. The ceiling of the church fell down during the pastorate of Rev. James R. Mace and \$600 was spent in replacing it with a hardwood one which always seemed to sag. When a freak tornado of March 21, 1976 tore off 1/3 of our 131 year old slate roof, the eventual repairs even took the droop out of the ceiling. Most important was the rededication of the members to the Church. From the demolishment of the horse sheds to the installation of the organ, electric lighting, oil burner and stained glass windows, the material side of the growth of our church continues. But none of these physical accomplishments would have been possible without the fifty-three ministers, the congregation which has grown from 171 in 1833 to over 650 members in 1974, and most importantly with the love of God. Our former minister, Lawrence E. Moore expressed so well the theme of the past, the present, and hopefully the future of the First United Methodist Church of Pennington when he said, "There is much to be done, but with the guidance and direction of God and dedication of Christian leaders, we will move ahead in accomplishing 'His Business'."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>1971 Charge Conference Annual Report. First United Methodist Church of Pennington, N.J., p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Volume 56, Hunterdon County Deeds, p. 344.

<sup>8</sup>Volume 5, Mercer County Deeds, p. 272.

## BRITISH METHODISM

by

Edna M. Molyneux

The background into which Methodism was born in Britain was entirely different from that of the American Colonies. The Church of England with the King as its head was the established state church, and everyone was expected to support and attend it. The Country was divided into dioceses and each diocese had a Cathedral and Bishop. Parish churches were dotted over the countryside but not always in the largest towns. The Cathedrals were partially supported by the Parish churches. The Bishops were appointed by the King and were political. They had little supervision and were left to do what they thought right in their diocese. They had large territories to cover and visitations were few and far between. The Church had innumerable rules of conduct with constant meetings, prayers, confessions, penances and other practices. The services were cold with chants and droning prayers. There was much prejudice against congregational singing and no hymn books were provided until after 1736. In early days the sexes were separated and graded according to social rank. Pew rents were also collected. Everyone was expected to bring their children to the sanctuary for baptism. Many never returned until marriage or burial. Slackness in religious habits was a generally accepted practice of the people. The atmosphere was rebellious and religion was generally at a low ebb. There were many dissenters and non-conformists who could not accept the state church. These consisted of small groups of Quakers, Baptists, Puritans and Moravians. The dissenters were liable to persecution and were in danger of being put in a dungeon or burned at the stake. Anyone caught in a congregation of more than five people for a religious service other than the Church of England was subject to penal offenses. First offense was 5 pounds or 3 months in prison; second offense 10 pounds or 6 months in prison. Third offense was banishment to America—except New England. In 1687 the right of dissent was legally recognized. Into this atmosphere Samuel Wesley and Susanna Annesley were born of dissenting ancestry. Both of their fathers were clergymen and ejected from

their livings. They both understood the situation well, yet by study and conviction they independently rejected dissent. Samuel made his decision as a young man when he decided to take holy orders. Susanna made a quick decision at age 13. It was not an easy decision for either of them to turn from non-conformity for which their ancestors had suffered so much. Several years later these two met and were married approximately at the time dissent was legally recognized. After seven years of marriage and seven children Samuel and Susanna were sent to the small Parish church at Epworth in Lincolnshire. The Epworth Rectory was to become the most famous in England. Twelve more children were born there, including John and Charles Wesley. They were a united and gifted family in many ways. Susanna was a well organized mother, housekeeper and teacher. As soon as a child reached five years of age, he began his education in his mother's kitchen. They were taught mathematics, grammar, history and geography. Samuel taught the classics and Susanna taught the girls theology. The boys were sent away to school at age 10-1/2. Susanna regularly kept school for six hours a day for 20 years. Later during Samuel's absence she started a woman's lib movement by organizing and encouraging fellowship groups in her kitchen. These groups grew rapidly from family and servants to villagers, until as many as one hundred attended. Samuel was aghast when he heard of it and ordered her to let someone else read. Her reply was that not one could read and she could not let the opportunity pass of "administrating charity to their souls." She little dreamed that two attentive boys at her feet were destined to lead a national religious movement that would spread throughout the world and set the world singing.

Both John's and Charles' formative years were spent in their mother's kitchen school. They were apt pupils and interested in everything. John was the 15th child and second son. Their older brother Samuel had left the home long before. This left John and Charles and many sisters in the household. When John was 10-1/2 he was sent to Charterhouse School in London. He grew up to be a small man, always neat in appearance, calm and restrained. He had a firm jaw and piercing eyes and when he preached everyone present felt he was talking directly to him alone. He was never rattled and seldom lost his temper; he had no fear of death and when mobs were let loose on him, he always had the situation under control. Leadership, authority and organizing skill came naturally to him. In per-



sonal relationships he was quiet, courteous and relaxed and had no difficulty in getting along with children and those less intelligent. With women he was less fortunate and never had a happy marriage. An eye witness describes him thus; "I saw a man, little of stature, erect and with gracious dignity, mount the pulpit steps. His face was pink and fresh, his eyes blue, his nose like an eagle and his mouth firm." He never lost contact with Epworth.

Charles, too, left Epworth at age 10-1/2 and later joined his brother at Christ Church, Oxford in 1726. He was also a small man but had a fuller face and figure than John. Poetic expression and music came readily to him, and he was extremely sociable by nature. He was more emotional than John. As a preacher he was successful especially in administering comfort to people in distress. He did not have the energy of John and after several years of itinerant travel, he settled down and became pastor to the Methodist people in Bristol, always remaining loyal to the established church. He had a happy marriage, at the age of 42, to Sarah Gwynne, the daughter of a country squire. Sarah was also musical and they gave many concerts in their home, both in Bristol and London. They raised three of eight children who were also brilliant and talented in musical fields. Charles Jr.'s ambition was to play the organ in St. Paul's, but this was denied him as they "wanted no Wesleys here." Daughter Sarah was a poet and literary personage. Son Samuel was also a talented organist and composer and left a large family, among whom was Samuel Sebastian Wesley. Together the Wesley brothers found that hymns were more effective than preaching—they became a medium of teaching theology to the people. The singing also provided an outlet for the emotionally starved poor. In 1735 both John and Charles were still at Oxford leading the various University groups. They were both restless and found something lacking. Then General James Oglethorpe came into their lives and they learned of his project in Georgia. A few years before, the General had persuaded the government to carry out some reforms in the penal institutions. Instead of consigning a man to prison because he could not pay his debts he suggested the debtors be sent to the new world and be given an opportunity to make good. In this way he had founded a colony in Georgia and made friends of the Indians. He saw in the Wesley brothers an opportunity for them to administer to the spiritual and physical welfare of the Colonists. In return the brothers hoped to preach to the Indians. Their stay in Georgia was a failure and on their return to

England the brothers were at loose ends. John was told by Peter Böhler, a Moravian minister, that he lacked faith through Christ. This advice led to May 24, 1738 and his Aldersgate experience where his heart was "strangely warmed." Three days before, Charles, too, had the same heart warming experience. This was a turning point in the Wesley brothers' lives. Now all their energies were directed outward for the benefit of their fellow men. Their personal concerns were forgotten and they became leaders and counsellors of their brethren and followers.

The originator of the revival in England actually was George Whitefield. For a time he was known to the public as its leader. It was his custom to preach from the hills and fields or wherever there was an audience. John Wesley could not accept this strange way of preaching. He gradually overcame his discomfort, and as more and more churches were closed to him, the field preaching became the principal means by which he and his followers spread the Gospel throughout England. They encountered fierce opposition as their work progressed: complaints of unconventional methods, untrained assistants, orthodoxy of his theology, etc. Mob violence was encountered frequently. Much of this violence was stimulated by the clergy and squires who felt Wesley was giving the lower classes ideas above their station. Much was caused, too, by jealousy and malice. All of this did not hamper the movement. Unexpectedly the violence ceased about 1751. Through the persecution and strife John Wesley was perfecting the organization of his societies. The largest groups were in Kingswood, Bristol and London. During the early years much of his time was spent in these headquarters. Vast crowds gathered whenever he preached. After organizing the three large groups, they were divided into smaller groups with a leader who met weekly for prayer, Bible study and religious conversation. These groups became the original training grounds for lay leaders. The leader was usually a layman and often of humble origins, with little or no education. The societies were then grouped into circuits—at first very large but gradually decreasing in size as the movement advanced. After 1748 all of the societies in each circuit met every quarter and issued a plan for the preacher's appointments from week to week in each society. Wesley retained the general control of all the circuits as their superintendent. Later he appointed a superintendent for each circuit. The societies developed their own devotional and liturgical practices. Preaching services were always



held at a different time than services in the Parish churches. The journeyings continued up and down England into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The headquarters formed a triangle from London-Bristol-Newcastle. For 28 years until John Wesley was 70 years of age he traveled entirely on horseback through all kinds of weather. Up to 5000 miles each year was covered besides preaching four or five times daily. He looked upon the whole world as his parish. Every stopping place he inspected and improved the societies and kept a lookout on their financial and spiritual affairs. He was helped by his brother Charles and a small group of ordained clergymen who gave support as much as possible. More and more he relied, reluctantly at first, on preachers who came from humble origin. It was his mother's influence that persuaded him to realize that these men were also called by God. Training programs were initiated in Bristol and London to train and prepare lay preachers for the work. Methodism was originally and essentially a movement for the deepening of the spiritual life within the established Church of England. It was also associated with other groups of earnest Christians formed within the church. At no time were these groups contemplating breaking away from the mother church. In 1753 John Wesley made a set of 12 rules for his helpers to follow after their probational period:

- Never be unemployed a minute.
- Never be triflingly employed.
- Be particular with young women in private.
- Do not affect the gentlemen.
- Be ashamed of nothing but sin—not of cleaning your shoes or someone else's—or fetching wood—or drawing water.
- Be punctual at all times.
- Do not mend our rules—but obey them.
- You have nothing to do but save souls—spend and be spent in the work.
- Observe—you will need all the sense you have and your wits about you.

The preachers wore black coats—white cravats and 3 cornered hats. By the time of the American Revolution there were 173 itinerant preachers in England.

Along with his travels John Wesley pioneered an educational movement in England, founded many schools, wrote many books,

kept a detailed journal of his travels and published 4 hymnbooks from 1742 to 1780. In the 1770 publications he included instructions how to sing: "Sing all, Sing lustily, Sing modestly, Sing in tune and Sing spiritually." The 1780 edition was called "Hymns for the use of the People called Methodist."

John Wesley found the Celtic and mining areas of Ireland, Wales and Cornwall in great need of spiritual help. The early Celts had their own language and resented the English Prayer Book being forced upon them at the time of the Reformation. These resentments were still harbored in their hearts in John Wesley's time. Most wanted to retain Catholicism. Many vices spread through these areas of smuggling, fighting and robbing. Because the Celts love to sing, they immediately took to the music and teachings of Methodism. These areas became very productive and the vices diminished. John Wesley visited Cornwall first in 1743 and returned 38 times. His first visit to Ireland was made in 1748—28 times he returned there. Violences were encountered there also. The services were conducted in their Gaelic language. Adam Clarke was also doing missionary work in his native Ireland where he established six day schools. He was also instrumental in keeping the Methodists together after Wesley's death. The visits to Wales were also frequent and productive. Many Welsh choirs were organized. The work was turned over to a Welchman, Howell Harris, who later founded a college for training ministers.

Three itinerant preachers were sent to the Colonies in America. Robert Strawbridge, a farmer, was sent to Maryland; Philip Embury, a school teacher, was sent to New York; and Thomas Webb, a retired Army officer, was sent to Philadelphia. Thomas Webb received his preacher's license in 1765 from John Wesley. He was known as the spiritual son of John Wesley and a soldier of the cross.

As time went on, John Wesley found it increasingly harder to stay within the bounds of the Church of England. His brother Charles vehemently disapproved of many of John's activities and viewed with alarm his various actions which he thought were contrary to the established Church. He was aghast at the many times their mother encouraged John's activities. Through it all the brothers remained deeply attached to each other and remained that way throughout their lives.

In 1784 John Wesley took two drastic steps that would sever the ties with the Church of England and make Methodism a separate

church. For several years he was becoming increasingly concerned about the future of the work he had begun. There was no hope that the Church of England authorities would take up and further the work of Methodism. He could not see among his followers any outstanding person to take over the leadership. Early in 1784 he legalized a Deed of Declaration and appointed a Conference of 100 specified men who would be his successors. This group became known as the "Legal Hundred." Secondly the war in the Colonies was over and the Americans were free. The Anglican clergymen had supported the British and therefore ceased to be welcome and returned to England. The few Methodist preachers had tried to remain neutral and remained there. Back in England, John Wesley was appalled because there were very few duly authorized persons to administer the sacraments in America. The authorities of the Church of England were apparently not going to do anything about it. On September 1, 1784, without consulting anyone, he ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey. The next day he consecrated Thomas Coke as superintendent. The three left for America. John Wesley continued to ordain preachers for the mission fields. At this time there were about 72,000 Methodists in England and about the same number overseas. Brother Charles was heartbroken at this trend of events. On his deathbed he said "Whatever the world may have thought of me, I have lived and I die in the communion of the Church of England, and I will be buried in the yard of my Parish Church!"

So Methodism developed from an unofficial society within the Church of England into a separate church outside it.

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Did you know that one of the first Editors of Sunday School literature for the M. E. Church was a member of the N. J. Conference?* Dr. Daniel P. Kidder (1815-1891) joined the Conference in 1841 and served as pastor in Patterson and Trenton before becoming Sunday School Editor. Prior to joining the N. J. Conference, Dr. Kidder was one of the pioneer missionaries in Brazil.

This outstanding minister originated Sunday School Institutes and Conventions, was Professor of Practical Theology at Garrett Biblical Institute and later at Drew. He was author of many books including, "Reminiscences of Trips and Residence in Brazil." This volume is still considered important historically for Brazil, as well as for evangelical Christianity in that country. Dr. Kidder's last position (1881-1887) was as Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Education of the M. E. Church.

Dr. Kidder transferred to the Rock River Conference in 1851, but later rejoined the N. J. Conference. He died July 29, 1891 and is buried in Chicago, Illinois.

*Did you know that Bishop Matthew Simpson (1811-1884) once had a summer home in Long Branch?* Bishop Simpson was probably the leading Methodist figure in America during the 3rd quarter of the 19th century. He was as much at home in the politics of Washington as he was in Methodist Annual Conferences. Bishop Simpson preached the funeral sermon for President Abraham Lincoln in the White House, and later in Springfield, Illinois.

When he moved to Philadelphia as Bishop, friends purchased a home for him. Later, other friends secured for him a summer home in what was then very fashionable Long Branch. His home faced the ocean on the beach side of Ocean Avenue in North Long Branch and was only recently torn down. Its site is now part of Monmouth County's Seven Presidents Park.

*Did you know that District Superintendents' Reports in the old Conference Minutes always reported on the many revivals in the Churches?* In the 1898 Minutes, Dr. Daniel B. Harris, Superintendent of the Camden District, reported as follows:

"There has been a good degree of revival interest in nearly all the churches, and over 1700 probationers will be reported. Some of the best results have been reached where the pastors have done their own evangelistic work . . . Probationers have been received as follows. First Church, Atlantic City, 60; Central, 30; Bethany, Camden, 65; Broadway, 151; First Church, 125; Eighth Street, 117; Tabernacle, 50; Trinity, 50; Union, 78; Williamstown, 52; Pleasantville, Collingswood, Asbury and Wesley, Cramer Hill; Winslow, Pleasant Mills, English Creek, Ewan, Gloucester City, Mantua, Marlton, Pedricktown, Emmanuel and St. Paul, Pennsgrove; Pitman Grove and Swedesboro have all been blessed with revivals, the churches have been quickened and souls have been saved." Lord, do it again!

*Did you know that one of the Charter Members of the N. J. Conference in 1836 was Levi Scott?* Levi Scott, native of Odessa, Delaware, was elected Bishop in 1852 and as Bishop dedicated many churches in our Conference. He was not a member of our Conference when elected Bishop, but he was a Charter member.

*Did you know that there is a cemetery in the Southern New Jersey Conference where 51 Methodist missionaries are buried?* Mt. Prospect Cemetery near Asbury Park is a large but not well cared for cemetery. In one section is a fine stone erected by the Woman's Home Missionary Society. On both sides of this stone were buried these 51 women missionaries between 1921 and 1969. Imagine the accomplishments of these missionaries, their lives of dedication to Jesus Christ.

Nor are these saints forgotten. Susan M. Lewis died in 1927. In 1976 a Church in Georgia where she started a Sunday School named their new Church Library in her memory.

One wonders if there is a cemetery anywhere that boasts of such a plot. That ought to be considered holy ground.

## Historical Society News

Work has begun by the members of the Commission on Archives and History on a project which, hopefully, will result in a new history of our Conference. Target date is 1986, the 150th Anniversary of our Conference. Right now we are trying to complete the Union list of all ministers of our Conference. A large task in itself. We are also inventorying hitherto unclassified records in our Archives.

One area of need is to locate and have placed in our Archives official records of Conference Boards and Agencies in keeping with our Conference's Archival Policy. If anyone has or knows the whereabouts of any such records, no longer in current use, please let our president, Dr. J. Hillman Coffee, 216 Engleside Ave., Beach Haven, N. J. 08008 or our Historian-Archivist, Rev. Robert B. Steelman, 207 Locust Ave., West Long Branch, N. J. 07764 know about it. Our inability to preserve our records deprives us of much useful information. See what you can turn up.

Our most recent archival acquisition is the records of Wesley Church, Pleasantville. Wesley Church closed in June of 1977. The Southeast District Superintendent, the Rev. C. Wesley Crossley, turned these records over to us. They have been sorted out, catalogued and placed in our Library-Archives at Pennington School.

You are invited to visit our room at Pennington School any time you can. Anyone researching N. J. Methodist history will want to use the material we have.

By the way, have you a copy of the 1792 *Journal of the Rev. Richard Swain*, published by the Society last year? It covers six months he preached on the Salem Circuit. This Circuit embraced all of Salem, Cumberland and Cape May Counties, plus part of Atlantic County. He also preached during this time or visited Pennington, Trenton, Crosswicks, Emley's Hill, Pemberton, Mt. Holly, Mantua, Burlington, Gibbstown and New Brunswick.



Interior of City Road Chapel.

At the time of the Ecumenical Conference of 1901.



## *First United Methodist Church*

Pennington, New Jersey

*(See article on pp. 7-11.)*